

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 TEL AV 02455 071502Z

ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 PA-02

USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 EUR-12 /063 W

-----080254Z 102539 /15

R 071419Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5609

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 2455

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, IS

SUBJECT: PRESS REPORT ON CRITICISM OF AIRPORT SAFETY

1. THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE JERUSALEM POST ON APRIL 8:

QUOTE: CONFLICTING VIEWS ON A 'LANDING THAT MIGHT HAVE ENDED IN DISASTER' ON TUESDAY MORNING WERE GIVEN TO THE JERUSALEM POST YESTERDAY BY A SENIOR ISRAELI PILOT AND THE DIRECTOR AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF BEN-GURION AIRPORT.

2. ACCORDING TO THIS PILOT A RUMANIAN AIRLINER, ABOUT TO LAND, OVERFLEW THE FIELD AND 'ALMOST CRASHED' INTO THE JUDEAN FOOTHILLS. THE CONTROL TOWER STAFF WAS ALERTED OF A POSSIBLE EMERGENCY AND THE PLANE WAS ORDERED TO BANK IMMEDIATELY AND HEAD BACK, WESTWARDS. THE AIRCRAFT LANDED SAFELY SOON AFTERWARDS.

THIS VERSION OF THE LANDING WAS DENIED AS 'ABSOLUTE NONSENSE' BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE AIRPORT, EZRA BALASS. HE SAID THERE HAD EVIDENTLY BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE CAPTAIN OF THE AIRCRAFT AND THE CONTROL TOWER. THIS MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE FAULT OF A FLIGHT CONTROLLER AND THE AIRCRAFT MERELY MADE A WIDE CIRCLE AROUND THE FIELD BEFORE TOUCH-DOWN.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 TEL AV 02455 071502Z

4. BALASS SAID THAT TO THE BEST OF HIS KNOWLEDGE THE INCIDENT DID NOT WARRANT ANY OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION.

5. VISIBILITY WAS POOR AT THE TIME BECAUSE OF LOW CLOUDS.

6. THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE AIRPORT IN CHARGE OF OPERATIONS, YAACOV WACHTEL, ALSO DENIED THE NEAR-CRASH VERSION AND SAID THAT IF ANYTHING OF THE SORT HAD HAPPENED HE WOULD HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF IT. HE WOULD NEVERTHELESS INVESTIGATE.

7. WACHTEL ALLEGED THAT 'CERTAIN INTERESTED PERSONS' WERE DELIBERATELY SPREADING DAMAGING REPORTS TO ENCOURAGE ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS IN THE AIRPORT.

8. THIS LATEST CONTROVERSY COMES AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF MOUNTING CRITICISM OF THE AIRPORT'S SAFETY PROVISIONS. TRANSPORT MINISTER GAD YA'ACOBİ THIS WEEK ORDERED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY TO CHECK COMPLAINTS BY PILOTS AND AIR CONTROLLERS ABOUT THE SITUATION.

9. THE ASSOCIATION OF ISRAELI PILOTS WILL PRESENT THEIR VIEWS ON THE ALLEGED SHORTCOMINGS AT BEN-GURION AIRPORT NEXT SUNDAY.

10. 'WE HAVE GONE TO CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE IN RESEARCHING OUR IDEAS,' THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION, CAPTAIN ARIEH OZ TOLD THE JERUSALEM POST YESTERDAY.

11. HE SAID THAT THE PILOTS' CONCLUSIONS WERE SUMMARIZED IN A PAMPHLET TO BE RELEASED BY THEM ON SUNDAY. ADVANCE COPIES WERE BEING GIVEN TO THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND SENIOR TRANSPORT AND AIRPORT EXECUTIVES.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 TEL AV 02455 071502Z

12. 'LOD IS OKAY AS LONG AS THERE IS VISUAL CONTACT, FINE WEATHER, AND THE SKIES ARE WIDE OPEN. TROUBLE STARTS ONCE IT BECOMES MURKY, OR WHEN THERE IS A LOT OF TRAFFIC AT NIGHT,' CAPTAIN OZ SAID. HE BELIEVED THAT THE AIRPORT WAS NOT EQUIPPED TO HANDLE TRAFFIC ON A 'TRULY INTERNATIONAL SCALE,' THE RADAR WAS NOT RELIABLE AND THERE WERE OTHER TECHNOLOGICAL SHORTCOMINGS.

13. AS TO THE REPORTED INCIDENT INVOLVING THE RUMANIAN PLANE, HE THOUGHT THAT THE CAPTAIN MIGHT HAVE HAD DIFFICULTIES MAKING HIMSELF UNDERSTOOD OR UNDERSTANDING THE LOD MESSAGES. EASTERN BLOC COUNTRIES USED A DIFFERENT TERMINOLOGY. WIND VELOCITIES, FOR INSTANCE, WERE MEASURED IN METRES PER SECOND RATHER THAN IN 'KNOTS.'

14. BUT MISHAPS COULD BE AVOIDED IF THERE WERE A

RELIABLE RADAR UNIT AVAILABLE AT LOD, HE ASSERTED.
END QUOTE.

15. THE CIVIL AVIATION ADMINISTRATOR, YEHUDA RABIN,
HAS TOLD US THAT IN HIS OPINION THIS LATEST CONTROVERSY
IS THE PRODUCT OF LABOR DISPUTES AT BEN GURION AIRPORT.
THE AIR CONTROLLERS WANT TO BE REPRESENTED BY THEIR OWN
COMMITTEE RATHER THAN THE GENERAL AIRPORT WORKERS COM-
MITTEE. RABIN MADE THE POINT THAT FROM TIME TO TIME
THE AIR CONTROLLERS HAVE UTILIZED THE ISSUE OF AIRPORT
SAFETY AS A PRESSURE TECHNIQUE. ON THE OTHER HAND,
RABIN DID NOT DENY THE ALLEGATION OF THE INCIDENT MEN-
TIONED IN THE ABOVE ARTICLE.
DUNNIGAN

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AIR SAFETY, PRESS COMMENTS, AIRPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 07-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TELAV02455
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770122-0604
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770476/aaaacnyj.tel
Line Count: 130
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 171049a8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2862100
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESS REPORT ON CRITICISM OF AIRPORT SAFETY
TAGS: EAIR, IS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/171049a8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009